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No. IV.

Letter from C. H. JOHNSTONE, Esq., on the Cultivation of Fig-Banana, as commonly practised in the Island of Grenada.

54 Great Ormond Street,
28th Nov. 1834.

GRENADA affords great facilities for the cultivation of the Banana-tree. It ratoons or reproduces from the old root for many years after being planted, though it takes twelve months before it comes to perfection. The mode of planting is as follows :—

Holes are dug, four feet square, and about eight feet asunder ; a part of the root of the old plantain, a sucker, is planted in the centre of the hole : these holes are kept as even as possible. Manure may be added, but generally such land is selected as does not require it ; all that is required is to keep them clean, and, as they grow, draw the mould to the roots. They grow best in hollows and damp places ; but, being very succulent, it is a very hardy plant, and succeeds almost any where. The interior of the island is well adapted for its cultivation, being undulating, mountainous, and well watered. The fibrous part of this plant is capable of being used in any way the other species of *Musa* are ; and, if any thing, it is the most hardy of them. The fruit contains more saccharine matter, and the one most commonly used for the table, and sometimes eaten raw when ripe, is the Red Fig Banana. The outer bark of this plant is also red, as well as the

mid-rib of the leaves. They are planted in large numbers ; sometimes from 5, 7, to 900, as described, the common plantain being intermixed. This is called a plantain-walk ; and, if judiciously done, a few are planted every month or two, so as to keep up a succession of crops, so that they do not all get ripe together. In addition to the uses mentioned, and which they are so well adapted to when dry, as recommended by the Society, they are used as sauce, and a good substitute for the apple. Nothing fattens pigs better, and poultry are fond of it ; and the stem sliced up, keeps sufficiently moist for turtle and for stock during a voyage home from the West Indies. The dried leaves are used for mattresses, and mats for various purposes. The other properties are, as of the *Musa* tribe generally, for cordage, &c.

The mode of drying it has been sent out to the Agricultural Society of Grenada by the writer of this sketch, which has been duly acknowledged by that body ; and they will be glad to receive any communications on the improvement of agricultural implements to save *labour* in the cultivation of the sugar-cane, coffee, or cocoa.

C. H. JOHNSTONE,
For the Island of Grenada.